

Annual Progress Report on American Education Shows Growth and Diversity

A just released annual report on education in the United States provides a picture of both growth and diversity in education. According to *The Condition of Education 2005*, released today by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Institute of Education Sciences, enrollments in both public and private elementary and secondary schools have increased, with public school enrollments increasing at a faster rate.

Concurrent with the increase in total enrollment, the percentage of public school students who are considered part of a racial or ethnic minority group has increased while the percentage who are White has decreased (indicator 4). This trend is most evident in the West, which, in 2003, became the first region of the country where the minority public school enrollment exceeded the White public school enrollment. This same trend also is evident in the fact that the percentage of school-age children who spoke a language at home other than English increased from 9 percent in 1979 to 19 percent in 2003 (indicator 5).

While the proportion of private school students in Catholic schools has decreased, the proportion in Conservative Christian schools has increased (indicator 2). In addition, the number of homeschooled students has grown in recent years—in 2003 there were 1.1 million homeschooled students, representing 2.2 percent of all school-age children (indicator 3).

This congressionally mandated report conveys current information on 40 indicators that address the success of the education system in the United States. These indicators cover all aspects of education, including trends in enrollments, student achievement, school environment, dropout rates, degree attainment, and long-term outcomes of education. Indicators in this new edition are also provided on the context of elementary and postsecondary education and the financial support for schooling at these levels.

Highlights of this year's report include:

A special analysis that describes the nature of the teacher workforce (special analysis) and shows that the great majority of teachers who are newly hired at schools each year are not brand-new teachers:

- While 17 percent of the teacher workforce in 1999-2000 were newly hired teachers at their school that year, only about a quarter of these newly hired teachers (or 5 percent of the teacher workforce) were brand-new teachers. The majority of newly hired teachers each year are experienced teachers who have transferred from another school or who have taken a break from teaching for a year or more. Moreover, the average age of brand-new teachers hired in 1999-2000 was 29 (suggesting that many of them did not enter the teacher workforce "right out of college").
- New teachers who did not enter teaching right of college, however, were three times more likely to have neither a major nor certification in the subject they taught compared with teachers continuing to teach at the same school (38 vs. 11 percent).
- At the end of 1999-2000, about 2 percent of the workforce retired, while 4 percent left to take a non-teaching job, 1 percent left for family reasons, and 1 percent left for other reasons. One of the most common sources of dissatisfaction among all teachers who transferred to a new school or left teaching altogether was a lack of time for lesson planning and preparation.

The performance of elementary and secondary students improved nationally, though not in all subjects and not at all grades:

- Between 1992 and 2003, the reading of 8th-graders increased but the performance of 4th-graders did not change. (indicator 9)
- From 1990 to 2003, the mathematics performance of 4th- and 8th-graders improved steadily. (indicator 10)
- However, in international comparisons of mathematics literacy and problem solving, U.S. 15-year-olds performed below the average score of students in 29 industrialized countries in 2003. (indicator 13)

Students' rates of progress in completing high school remain uneven:

- Since 1972, the status dropout rates for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics (ages 16-24) have declined but rates for Hispanics have remained higher than those for other racial/ethnic groups. The status dropout rate

represents the percentage of an age group that is not enrolled in school and has not earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. (indicator 19)

- Although the dropout rate declined for young adults over the 30-year period from 1972 through 2002, it remained fairly stable over the last decade (1992 through 2002). (indicator 19)

Rates of enrollment in postsecondary education after graduation from high school remain the same overall but varies for minorities:

- Between 1972 and 2003, the rate at which high school completers enrolled in college in the fall immediately after high school increased from 49 to 64 percent but it has remained at about 64 percent since 1998. (indicator 20)
- In 2003, 66 percent of White high school completers enrolled in college the fall immediately after high school, compared with 58 percent of Blacks and 59 percent of Hispanics. (indicator 20)

Data on the school environment show that:

- The average number of required hours spent in school increased between 1987-88 and 1999-2000 at the elementary, middle and high school levels. On average, middle school students spent more time than elementary or high school students. (indicator 26)
- In 2002, about 90 percent of 10th-graders, in both high- and low-minority public schools, reported that students in their school make friends with students of other racial and ethnic groups. (indicator 29)
- Sixty-three percent of 10th-graders reported that when they work hard at school, their teachers praise their efforts. About half reported that students often got away with misbehavior at their school. (indicator 29)
- The percentage of students ages 12–18 who were victims of theft and violent crime was cut in half between 1992 and 2002. (indicator 30)